

Representative Jeff Morris • 40th District

District Issues

Protecting open space – Lopez Hill and Blanchard Mountain

A big part of what makes our community a great place to live is the natural habitat. The San Juan Islands are the crown jewel of the Puget Sound, while the Skagit Valley and surrounding Chuckanut Mountains offer breath-taking views and beautiful landscapes.

Our open space is also an economic asset. Tourists from all over the state – and around the world – visit our region every year to take in the sights, eat in our restaurants, shop in our stores and stay in our hotels and B&Bs.

Protecting this open space means protecting our quality of life and local jobs, and is why I worked with my 40th District colleagues to secure funding to protect Blanchard Mountain and Lopez Hill.

San Juan County gets full time judge

After several decades of sharing a district court judge with Island County, the state has agreed to hire a new district court judge to serve exclusively in San Juan County.

Soon, San Juan County residents will be able to elect their own judge and choose the right person for the job. The San Juan legal community and your local County elected officials made a compelling case and the Legislature listened.

Skagit Valley Rec Center

I am happy to report that my request for \$1 million in funding for a new indoor recreation center in Mount Vernon was included in the state's Capital Budget. The Capital Budget is used to fund construction projects and because money is tight, only a handful of projects received this level of funding. Groundbreaking for the first phase of the project is slated for October of 2009.



To save money on printing and postage, I have started to deliver these updates electronically. If you would like to receive future updates via e-mail, please visit my website at <http://www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/morris> and sign up for my electronic newsletters.

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Report to the 40th District

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2007 Legislative Update

- Electronic Bill of Rights
- Climate Change
- Ferry Service
- Winter Storm Response
- District Issues

Dear friends and neighbors,

This past legislative session was certainly a different experience from any other in which I've had the privilege to represent you. With the state Senate gaining a working majority for the first time in nearly 15 years and an overwhelming number of Democrats winning election, many new voices had to be considered.

I continued to offer proactive proposals in the technology and energy areas. Much of my time was spent sorting out privacy and ethical issues around new technologies like Radio Frequency Identification Tags and stem cell research. I also spent a great deal of time sorting out a state climate change law. I developed the striking amendment that was adopted by the House to fix a troubled Senate bill – my amendment was ultimately signed into law by Governor Gregoire.

I was troubled by the energy and technology agenda of some of our state's leaders over the past year. I was particularly distressed by the mixed messages sent when administration officials fought one proposal that would have saved \$2 million in electricity costs and prevented 25,000 lbs of CO2 emissions from being released into our atmosphere every year, while talking about how much they want to fight climate change.

Also, our efforts to save money and streamline our state's Information Technology (IT) expenditures and delivery of IT services to state agencies was rebuffed.

Nevertheless, I am pleased with many of the accomplishments of the 2007 Legislature and hope this newsletter will provide you information on some of them.

Thank you for the continued honor of representing you.

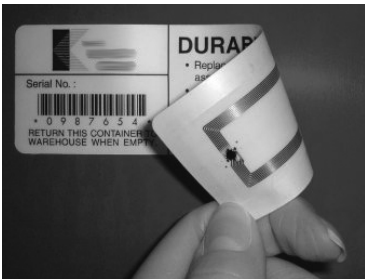
Sincerely,

Rep. Jeff Morris



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ELECTRONIC BILL OF RIGHTS



Every time you swipe your credit card, use a store-issued club card, or type in your phone number at a checkout key pad, you are leaving an electronic trail of personal information.

As technology becomes more sophisticated, so will information collection practices.

Similar to the common bar code found on almost all products, the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) is far more advanced and can send and receive signals.

Why does RFID threaten personal privacy?

The potential scenarios for abuse and threats to personal privacy are seemingly endless when you take into account two things:

- 1) The chips are difficult to find and nearly impossible to turn off, and
- 2) It is fairly simple and inexpensive to construct a scanning device to read these chips and link them to individual consumers.

Imagine unknowingly carrying around a chip – that

is imbedded in a pop can, a pair of shoes or a purse – that broadcasts your presence to a would-be thief or marketing firm. This is a real possibility in the new RFID world.

RFID Legislative Action

I introduced a modest, technology neutral proposal to regulate RFID and other technologies. Nationwide, the industry has spent millions fighting these simple goals and it is not different here in our state. Corporate lobbyists managed to bottle up my legislation this session, but I will reintroduce it in 2008. The two main provisions of my plan are:

Banning electronic trolling — I want to prohibit companies or people from remotely scanning these chips to identify consumers without their knowledge. The above scenario is as troubling, as it is feasible, and I want to stop these situations before they begin.

Labeling — If consumers know where the chips are in a particular product, they can take steps to remove the chips. Similarly, if consumers know which stores are using this technology and which stores are not, then the consumer can choose where to do business.

The issues surrounding RFID are important and complex. I am preparing a special report on RFID for the fall.



FERRIES

As a fourth generation San Juan native, I know that the ferries are an icon of island life but are also a source of constant frustration. Inconsistency and mismanagement by WSF has lead to drastic rate increases and jeopardized some runs.

I understand that there are some issues that are out of WSF's control, but the documented cases of poor internal decision making has gone on for far too long. Last year, the Legislature commissioned a study to look into WSF's finances and make recommendations on how to revamp the system.

This study validates several of the concerns that I have expressed over the years and makes several recommendations. I supported legislation to implement these recommendations including:

- 1) **Fare and pricing strategies** — We were able to freeze fares from May 1, 2007 to September 1, 2009. During this time we will look at revising the fare policy with an eye on how fare changes affect different communities. Also the ferries should look at how pricing during off-peak hours could affect daily commute patterns.
- 2) **Operating strategy** — WSF is not currently looking at how operating strategies affect capital cost, but it should. Capital improvements, terminals and parking lots are being designed to address peak loads, but if peak loads can be reduced with pricing or other strategies, maybe the ferries can delay expensive expansions.
- 3) **Market Survey** — WSF doesn't know enough about its riders and how changes to schedules and

pricing would affect ridership. The study recommends that WSF conduct an annual survey to better understand its customers' needs.

4) **Level of Service Standard (LOSS)** — Wait times affect how large terminals need to be, parking areas and operating procedures. The study found the LOSS was out-of-date and in some cases may have artificially inflated capital costs.

Wave and Tidal Power

I will be holding a work session on wave and tidal electricity generation in August/September. With the many applications across our region and the need for more renewable resources, we need a better understanding of the footprint of these facilities and also their impact on our marine life. Please contact my office if you would like to join me for the work session.



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Winter Storm Response – Getting the lights back on

A severe winter storm ripped through Northwest Washington last December leaving hundreds of thousands without power for several days. Repair crews were dispatched and despite round-the-clock efforts, many homes were left in the dark for nearly two weeks.

I heard from many of you about your frustrations and invited power companies, utility districts and members from the line-workers union to discuss response efforts before my committee.

We learned just how devastating the damage was, but we also learned of several issues that caused delays in their repair efforts. I am working during this interim to shore up these issues and make our electric grid more resistant to weather anomalies.

CLIMATE CHANGE

This year we became the second state in the nation to pass greenhouse gas emission standards for electricity generation. This landmark legislation (SB 6001) caps greenhouse gas emissions for new electricity generation at 1,100 tons per megawatt hour of production. This cap effectively freezes future emission at today's levels.

There is still a great deal of work that needs to be done in other sectors to deal with climate change. Electric power generation only accounts for 16 percent of Washington State's overall CO2 emissions, while the transportation sector accounts for nearly 48 percent.

I am preparing a special, in depth report on climate change and will be sending it in the e-mail version of my newsletter.



Representative Jeff Morris

Report to the 40th District